

Downtown Commission Meeting  
Minutes of December 11, 2009  
8:30 a.m.  
1st Floor North Conference Room - City Hall

**Present:** Chairman Jesse Plaster; Councilman Jan Davis, Mr. John D. Rogers, Ms. Kitty Love, Mr. Peter Alberice, Mr. Byron Greiner, Mr. Dwight Butner and Ms. Pamela Myers

**Absent:** Mr. Guadalupe Chavarria and Mr. Brad Galbraith

Chairman Plaster called the meeting to order at 8:30 p.m. and informed the audience of the public hearing process.

**Administrative**

- ? Mr. Greiner moved to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2009, meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Rogers and carried unanimously (with Mr. Alberice abstaining from voting due to his absence at the November 13 meeting).

**Updates**

**Downtown Association**

Mr. Greiner announced (1) their new election of the Downtown Association Board members; (2) they are working on a jazz series at Pack Place during January – March; and (3) the State of Downtown luncheon which will possibly be held during the first or second week in February.

**Pack Square**

Ms. Myers said they are working hard to complete mid-park by the end of the year.

In response to Mr. Butner, Mr. Kelly Miller, Executive Director of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, updated the Commission on the Visitor's Center.

**Downtown Task Force**

Urban Planner Alan Glines briefed the Commission on a few highlights: (1) Saturday Seasonal Sizzles; (2) Warren Haynes Christmas Jam on Saturday, December 12 at the Civic Center; (3) Avett Brothers on December 31 at the Civic Center; and (4) Wayfinding Program signs beginning to be installed with a press conference on Monday, December 14.

**Membership & Annual Report**

Urban Planner Stephanie Monson said that she sent the Commission members all applications to date for the Downtown Commission vacancies. The deadline for applications is Wednesday, January 6, 2010. There are five expiring terms, one of which is eligible for reappointment (Mr. Chavarria). She noted that Mr. Butner was reappointed by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners. She said that at the January meeting she would like to get a recommendation from the Commission for Council consideration. Chairman Plaster noted that he has spoken with Mr. Chavarria and he is considering whether or not he will be requesting reappointment.

In response to Mr. Butner regarding the Downtown Commission appointments, Councilman Davis said that City Council will determine who they would like to interview on January 12 and interview and appoint on January 26, 2010. He felt it would be helpful for the

Commission to make their recommendations prior to the January 12 meeting. He felt the Commissioners could recommend candidates or specific qualifications they would like to see in a Commission member. Ms. Bernstein said that this will be discussed at the Commission's next meeting on January 8, 2010.

Ms. Monson said that an annual report is required each year. She provided the Commission members with a copy. She asked the Commissioners send her an e-mail if they find something is missing, needs to be added, or needs to be corrected. She noted that the Commission roster is not included in this information at this time.

### **Downtown Design Review**

#### **Art Museum Informal Design Review Update**

Chairman Plaster said that the Commission last saw the Art Museum design in February of 2009 and the formal review will be at the January 2010 meeting.

Ms. Myers introduced Board and staff members from the Art Museum who were present in the audience.

Mr. Rogers, architect, said that since the Commissioners have seen this project in the past and he would identify a few main things that have changed along the way (roof terrace is moved; addition of a window off the permanent gallery; permanent gallery doesn't protrude as much over the western façade; and changes to the western side the façade). He explained that project is the renovation of the portions of Pack Place which are spaces currently occupied by the Art Museum and the spaces that are currently occupied by the Health Adventure. He said the arrangement of the spaces which allows us to return the building to the architectural condition it was when it was a library. Using renderings, he explained in detail the renovations, the facades and the floor plans. He also briefed the Commissioners on the staging plan for construction of the building, noting that the sidewalks will not be closed.

Throughout Mr. Rogers' presentation he and Ms. Myers responded to various questions/comments from the Commissioners.

Urban Planner Jessica Bernstein said that there will be a few modifications for the Commission to approve during formal review (1) street trees along Biltmore Avenue; (2) a requirement for a pedestrian entrance to be along a frontage line – no requirement that it be on Biltmore Avenue; (3) requirement for expanses of solid wall, not to exceed 20 feet; and (4) question on fenestration.

#### **Buncombe County Courthouse Life-Safety Addition**

Chairman Plaster said that the informal review of the Buncombe County Courthouse life-safety addition has been cancelled and may come before the Commissioners at their next meeting.

### **Downtown Master Plan Implementation**

#### **Committee Updates**

Mr. Alberice provided the Commissioners with a brief update from the Urban Design Subcommittee. They are working on a spreadsheet that shows where we started in the Master Plan, what exists in the Unified Development Ordinance, issues that have come up that are

unintended consequences to be considered, and recommendations from the Committee. The Committee will then have a series of minority recommendations that are other ideas that members of the group have come up with that are in opposition of what the Master Plan recommends. They are evaluating and making recommendations based on what was included in the Master Plan.

Councilman Davis said that the Transportation and Parking Subcommittee met and they are decided what substance pieces of the Master Plan they would like to work on. Mr. Butner was pleased with the communication being constructive.

Ms. Love and Ms. Myers provided the Commissioners with an update on the Arts Subcommittee. Ms. Diane Ruggiero, Cultural Arts Superintendent, gave them an overview of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and her role. They talked about the Public Art Master Plan and the Parks & Recreation Master Plan that was recently adopted and the priorities listed in there in terms of how that dovetails with some of the issues in the Downtown Master Plan. They agreed to function with consensus. They also started seeding subcommittees to start moving some of the recommendations forward.

Mr. Butner provided the Commissioners with a brief update on the Downtown Management Subcommittee. The Downtown Association has done a study about how Asheville's downtown has been managed vs. other places in the state and a tax analysis was presented to the Association. A matrix was also distributed to the Association about how business improvement districts or municipal service districts were the depth and breath for a range of services that can be provided. Currently they are reviewing that matrix and trying to establish what we would like to see happen if we go to the management system downtown. They agreed to function with consensus with a chairman rotation. Mr. Rogers also noted that they talked about how they would structurally organize themselves.

Ms. Sasha Vrtunski, Downtown Master Plan Project Manager, said that the Historic Preservation Subcommittee met last week and discussed all but one strategy. That strategy, which mainly talks about programming, will be discussed at their next meeting in January. There is a lot of great material to work with.

### **Miscellaneous**

Planning & Development Director Judy Daniel appreciated the Commission members who attended the City Council meeting where the first group of items were to be discussed, however, due to the lateness of the hour, Council did delay the item until their January 12 meeting. On behalf of City Council, Councilman Davis apologized to the Commission for the last minute postponement.

Mr. Alberice felt there may be some criticism from different groups in the community, particularly developers, being asked to buy into a process without knowing what the design guidelines will be. Councilman Davis felt this may require a Council worksession devoted to it.

In response to Mr. Butner, Ms. Bernstein said that the recommendation going to Council from the consensus from the group is that Level III projects that are within the historic core would be reviewed as conditional zoning and Level III projects that are elsewhere in the rest of the Central Business District go through a site plan review. The Master Plan recommends all Level III projects recommend site plan review only.

### **Adjournment**

At 9:52 a.m., Mr. Greiner moved to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Butner and carried unanimously.